

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 446

BY REPRESENTATIVE STEVE CARTER

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Provides for a voucher program for certain public school students

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Part III of Chapter 43 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be
3 comprised of R.S. 17:4031.1, relative to reading scholarships for certain public
4 school students; to establish the Reading Scholarship Program; to provide for student
5 eligibility, program administration, scholarship amount and uses, notifications,
6 reports, and funding; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. Part III of Chapter 43 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of
9 1950, comprised of R.S. 17:4031.1, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 PART III. READING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

11 §4031.1. Reading Scholarship Program; establishment; student eligibility;
12 administration; scholarship amount and uses; notifications; reports; funding

13 A. The Reading Scholarship Program, hereafter in this Part referred to as the
14 "program", is hereby established for the purpose of providing educational options for
15 eligible students.

16 B.(1) A student who is enrolled in a public school in the third, fourth, or fifth
17 grade and scores below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in
18 the prior school year is an eligible student.

19 (2) An eligible student who is classified as an English Language Learner and
20 is enrolled in a program or receiving services that are specifically designed to meet

1 the instructional needs of English Language Learner students shall be given
2 preference.

3 C. The state Department of Education shall administer and provide for the
4 implementation of the program pursuant to rules and regulations developed and
5 adopted for such purpose by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
6 in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

7 D. In administering the program, the department shall:

8 (1) Determine student eligibility for scholarships.

9 (2) Develop and accept applications from parents or legal guardians of
10 eligible students.

11 (3) Award scholarships to the parents or legal guardians of eligible students
12 on a first-come, first-served basis, except for the preference provided for in
13 Paragraph (B)(2) of this Section.

14 (4) Notify each city, parish, and other local school board of the application
15 process, requirements, and deadlines for parents and legal guardians.

16 E. By not later than September thirtieth each year, each city, parish, and
17 other local public school board shall notify the parent or legal guardian of each
18 student in grades three through five who is enrolled in a school under its jurisdiction
19 and who scored below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in
20 the prior school year of the process for applying for a scholarship pursuant to
21 Paragraph (D)(4) of this Section.

22 F.(1) The amount of each scholarship shall be five hundred dollars, and the
23 scholarship shall be used by a parent or legal guardian for any of the following
24 eligible expenses that are designed to improve reading or literacy skills:

25 (a) Instructional materials.

26 (b) Curriculum, including online instruction.

27 (c) Tutoring services provided by a person who holds a valid Louisiana
28 teaching certificate issued by the state Department of Education or a person who
29 holds a baccalaureate or graduate degree in the subject area.

- 1 (d) Summer education programs.
- 2 (e) After-school education programs.
- 3 (2) The department shall remit scholarship payments to parents and legal
- 4 guardians in accordance with time lines determined by the department.
- 5 (3) Any expenses above the amount of the scholarship paid to a parent or
- 6 legal guardian shall be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.
- 7 G. The department shall submit a report to the House Committee on
- 8 Education and the Senate Committee on Education by not later than April thirtieth
- 9 each year regarding the implementation of the program. The report shall include, at
- 10 a minimum, the following information for that year:
- 11 (1) The total number of students receiving a scholarship.
- 12 (2) The public schools in which such students are enrolled and the number
- 13 of students receiving scholarships in each school.
- 14 (3) The total dollar amount of the scholarships awarded.
- 15 H. Implementation of the program is subject to the appropriation of funds for
- 16 such purpose.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 446 Original

2019 Regular Session

Steve Carter

Abstract: Provides for a voucher program for public school students in 3rd through 5th grade who score below mastery in English language arts on state assessments.

Proposed law establishes the Reading Scholarship Program for eligible students. Defines "eligible student" as a student who is enrolled in a public school in the third, fourth, or fifth grade and who scored below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in the prior school year. Gives preference to eligible students classified as English Language Learners.

Proposed law provides that the amount of the scholarship is \$500 and eligible expenses are: instructional materials; curriculum, including online instruction; tutoring services; summer programs; and after-school programs all of which are designed to improve reading or literacy skills.

Proposed law requires the state Dept. of Education to administer the program pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education. Requires the department to:

- (1) Determine student eligibility.
- (2) Develop and accept applications and award scholarships on a first-come, first-served basis, except as otherwise provided by proposed law.
- (3) Notify local school boards of the application process, requirements, and deadlines for parents and legal guardians.
- (4) Annually report to the House and Senate education committees on the implementation of the program.

Requires local public school boards to notify the parents or legal guardians of eligible students of the process for applying for a scholarship.

Specifies that any expenses above the amount of the scholarship shall be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

Provides that program implementation is subject to the appropriation of funds.

(Adds R.S. 17:4031.1)